

# City Hall

**orphan\_account**

## City Hall by orphan\_account

**Category:** Dark Tower - Stephen King, IT (2017), IT - Stephen King, kinda - Fandom

**Genre:** HELLA 80's references, IT - Freeform, It's dark and not all that happy y'all have fun, Other, Pennywise hates you but also loves you, Reader-Insert, a LOT of Dark Tower references, cameo from Roland and super small cameo from Father Callahan, its distressing, pennywise - Freeform, pennywise x reader - Freeform

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Pennywise (IT), Reader, Roland Deschain, The Losers Club (IT), he makes a cameo is never named though

**Relationships:** Pennywise (IT)/Original Character(s), Pennywise (IT)/Original Female Character(s), Pennywise (IT)/Reader

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2017-10-05

**Updated:** 2017-10-05

**Packaged:** 2020-01-24 17:52:04

**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences

**Warnings:** Graphic Depictions Of Violence

**Chapters:** 6

**Words:** 19,256

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

You've just graduated college and moved back into your old home in Derry, Maine, where you had lived briefly as a child. But something's not right - you're not the only thing back. Eventually, you join forces with the Losers Club and struggle to survive the nightmare Pennywise the Dancing Clown puts you through.

# 1. Chapter 1

## Author's Note:

Originally posted on Tumblr (follow me @Commala) under the same name, uploading it here!

*Tap tap tap.*

Rain against the window.

You forgot how often it rained here.

You looked out of the tiny room into street, listening to the *tap tap tap* of water. The only sound in the world, seemingly. It was eerie how quiet the sleepy town was – just having moved back from New York City, you were used to constant noise. You missed the energy of New York, the way the city was alive with lights and sounds – little old Derry Maine was so much slower. Muted. The dark gray concrete of the street outside matched the sky perfectly. You had lived in Derry briefly with your dad when you were younger – maybe twelve or so - before you had moved in with your mom. Now you were back, all grown up, just graduated from college and needing a place to stay while you searched for jobs.

You didn't remember living in Derry, though. Not really. The memories were fuzzy, disjointed, missing. You could remember New York just fine, but Derry had always been a bit of a black spot in your mind. Hidden behind a hazy shroud, muffled like actors behind a curtain before opening night.

You tapped your fingers against the window in time with the droplets. *Tap tap tap*. As you watched, a gang of kids on bikes zoomed down the middle of the road. They were yelling and calling to each other, soaking wet, oblivious to the weather. You smiled as the group quickly dipped to the right and disappeared down the street. Now *that's* a memory – carefree summer days with your friends, always out on some adventure. Maybe walking around town would bring something back? It's not like you had anything else planned for the day, and the rain had died down to a light drizzle.

You pulled on your yellow raincoat – a little too neon for your taste, but hey, it would work – and walked out the door.

You made your way aimlessly down the road. You saw a man standing in his driveway, staring out at nothing. He looked to be maybe late 40s, with sandy blonde hair and thick rimmed glasses. The rain had soaked through his shirt.

*Weird*, you thought, changing direction to approach him. “Excuse me?” You said. “Can you tell me which direction the middle school is?”

The man looked at you and then visibly started. For a while he said nothing, just stared. You were reminded of an old New York joke – “*Can you tell me how to get to City Hall, or should I just go fuck myself?*”

“Uh. Hello?” You tried again.

“Down this road to the right. Three more blocks from there.” He said, still eyeing you like you were the weird one in this interaction.

“Oookay. Thanks.” You gave him a little wave and fast walked down the road. He didn’t wave back.

You found the middle school shortly after, even though it was down the road to the right, *then the left*, then three more blocks from there. Things were slowly coming back. You had attended the school briefly, which had gotten a much needed paint job since, but was otherwise the same. There was the grocery store you’d get candy from with crumpled up dollar bills you’d sneak from your dad’s wallet. There was the street that led down to... what was it called?

*Lover’s Lane.*

The name came back to you suddenly. *Lover’s Lane*, that was it! You bit your lip, brushed a strand of wet hair from your face. The rain hadn’t stopped. You could go home, or...

Fuck it. Why not?

When you got to the old bridge, you were satisfied to find it was exactly the same, untouched by time. You ran your fingers along the

wood, feeling the indents of carved names and poorly constructed hearts. You had come down here before, as a kid...and you had....

You turned your head to the right, looking over the bridge into the woods. The woods. Right. There was a river down there. You used to play there.

Driven by instinct, you hopped the railing and shuffled through dead leaves down into the ravine. In the woods now, you could hear rushing water nearby. You made your way over rocks and the occasional fallen log, careful not to slip.

You could see the river now, could hear its low grumble. But there was something else in the air.

Was that *music*?

A sticky nauseating feeling overcame you. It brought back a vivid memory of Halloween when you were seven; you had coated the lacy frills of your witch costume with pink and yellow vomit after eating a family sized bag of Laffy Taffy. You hadn't been able to eat the shit since. *Shhh*. Listen.

Not just music. Carnival music. Faintly, it came floating down the river as naturally as the water.

*What the fuck?*

You were at the edge of the bank now, alone in the woods, and yet you could hear music, clear as day. Was there a carnival in town? No – couldn't be, the music was too loud, in fact it was getting *louder*, and there was nowhere nearby for a carnival to set up.

The jarring sound continued. An accordion, the occasional trumpet or maybe trombone, and the high pitched screech of piano keys being hit just a little too hard. Your body was heating up and cooling simultaneously. You went very still. Dark thoughts began crawling out from the back of your mind, spiraling in every direction like a nest of startled spiders.

You were afraid.

And you were remembering. This was somehow familiar.

Movement to your left caught your eye. Turning, you saw a single red balloon on the opposite side of the watery crossing, outlined perfectly by the black mouth-like entrance to the sewers. It hovered in midair, faultlessly still.

It called to you.

You were transfixed. In the haze of a fever dream, you waded through the river, oblivious to the icy water soaking through your boots and jeans, staining the dark blue fabric black. That terrible feeling of foreboding was festering in the unlit corners of your mind, and from that airless and soundless place, you were begging yourself to turn around. But the conscious part of you, for whatever inexplicable reason, really, *really* wanted to be closer to that goddamn balloon. The music swelled, getting louder, and oh, you realized – it's coming from the sewer.

Smells now, too. The sweet tang of cotton candy and popcorn, funnel cakes and hamburgers. A fucking circus, right here in the sewer. *Step right up!* The balloon seemed to invite. *Step right up little girl, and see the magical sewer circus for yourself!*

Hadn't you been to a circus the last time you were in Derry?

*You'll laugh! You'll cry!*

It was right in front of you now. Your own dumb, blank expression was reflected in its bloated red version of the world. Pale letters stretched across the latex, spelling out the words; "Welcome back!" You were just underneath the overhang of the sewer, could faintly hear the *tap tap tap* of rain echoing against the metal roof beneath the

jangling keys and accordion. The music had gotten faster.

Your right arm began to rise from your side, fingers parted; you reached for the white string.

*You'll die!*

The balloon popped.

You screamed.

Standing there, behind what was once the balloon, was a clown. Only *clown* wasn't the right word – it was like some creature abandoned by God had crawled into a clown's skin and stretched it out too far. It must have been nearly seven feet tall, with long, gangly limbs that hung limp at its sides. Tufts of swept back orange hair grew from a head too big to be human. Its eyes were ringed with black and glowed an unearthly yellow. Its costume was stained, mangled and faded. And its mouth – painted a dark red – was pulled back into a smile that looked more like a snarl. Jagged buck teeth glinted in the light.

“Hiya Y/N!” It said. Cheerfully, with the kind of high pitched exaggerated tone a person would use when playing with children. Its left eye drifted out of alignment in its socket. “Can you tell me how to get to City Hall?”

For a beat, you were perfectly still.

“*Fuck* that!” You screamed, and then you were *gone* – running, running, running blindly back the way you had come, the spell of the balloon broken the second it had popped. Your heart was hammering inside your chest as you sloshed through the river at break neck speeds. A part of you was amazed– you had never run so fast in your life. You had never felt fear so sharp in your life, either. Your blood

was on fire. The hooting laugh of the clown followed you, but you couldn't dare risk looking back.

You were still running through the woods, slapping away wet branches, not knowing where you were going, when suddenly you tripped out of the tree line and went sprawling into the street.

Right in front of a gang of kids on bikes.

"Holy shit!" One of them yelped. You gasped for breath, tried to stand, and then fell back down on your sorry ass.

"Jesus, are you okay?" Another voice asked. They had crowded around you. You needed to warn them - *Hey kids, we gotta get the fuck outta Dodge before ol' Ronald McDonald here adds us to the secret menu* - But it came out as a wheezy; "Ah - f-fuck - the fucking - the sewer, and - "

"Oh, shit," One boy said, his eyes growing wide and his eyebrows pulling together in horrified realization. "You s-saw it, didn't you?"

You were still panting, but had calmed down enough for the scene to come into focus. You looked at the kid who had spoken - a boy of maybe fourteen, with short brown hair and deep blue eyes. You suddenly thought of John Wayne in all those old Westerns - he had eyes like that too. Bombardier eyes.

"Saw *what*?"

"*It. The Clown,*" He answered. "You saw the clown."



## 2. Chapter 2

And so you found yourself in the garage of Bill Denbrough – the boy with the blue bombardier eyes – and six other kids.

*Bill, Beverly, Mike, Eddie, Richie, Ben, Sam – no, it was Stan – this is too much.*

Bill had given you a pack of Band-Aids – with little balloons on them, you noticed with a grim smile - for the scrapes you had collected from eating shit on the pavement. Your right palm was still bleeding, and your shins stung from underneath slowly drying jeans. As you checked yourself over for damage, the kids filled you in on the story of “IT”. The recent rash of disappearances. The history of the town. Georgie. One by one, they told you of their own run-ins with Bozo – and with each story you found yourself less and less convinced. Although you had the scare of your life not two hours prior, with each ticking second the experience seemed to fade a bit – slipping back into that deep well where all your memories of Derry seemed to live. Your fear had wilted and your rationality had returned.

“The Neibolt house – the one we mentioned,” Mike said. “Is where It lives. And we’re going there tomorrow. We’re gonna try and kill It.” Mike and Sam – No, it was *Stan*, dammit - had been fairly quiet throughout the conversation, and you had hoped they were the rational members of the group. Guess not.

“*Dude*,” you said, in the ‘don’t fuckin’ play with me’ tone you had perfected for when NYC scam artists tried to sell you fake Gucci purses, or when your best friend told you she was getting back together with her ex.

“We have to do *something*,” Ben said. He had such an innocent, scared look to him; it made you think of lost puppy posters. “I guess you’re a part of the Club now. Are you coming?”

With a slack jaw and furrowed brows, you stared at the kids around you. They all matched your gaze, expectantly. *God, they’re just kids*, you thought. *Kids who see my dumb, recent college*

*graduate ass, and assume I know best. Fully expecting me to be their Mrs. Frizzle on this magic school bus trip to hell.*

You had *definitely* heard enough.

“No. Not uh. You aren’t going anywhere,” You said, standing, ignoring the ache in your legs. You should probably run more. “It’s not a demon, or a curse, or whatever, okay? Demons aren’t real – it’s a sick motherfucker in a clown costume, and I’m gonna call the cops, and they’re gonna handle this.”

“*What!?*” half of them shouted. You snorted. It was like you had just declared the earth flat, or that *Star Wars* sucked.

“Look – I have no doubt that you all *think* these things happened. And I have no doubt there’s a dude in the sewers that thinks he’s the Joker after reading too many Batman comics and could use some time in a padded cell. But he’s *dangerous*. I’m not gonna stand by while a bunch of kids go off pretending to be the Justice League.”

“No fucking *shit* It’s dangerous! Weren’t you listening!?” Richie yelled, his voice breaking on the end of ‘listening’.

“Beep beep, Richie.” The scrawny kid named Eddie muttered – a term you would later learn was the gang’s way of saying “*Shut the fuck up,*” in front of adults – but Richie wasn’t done.

“I knew we shouldn’t have told a grown-up! They never listen!”

You rolled your eyes. You had never once considered yourself a “grown-up” – but you had to admit, in this group, your age meant you were defacto in charge. The wise old Yoda to their Luke. *Patience, my seven young padawans.* The second they had told you about the hair brained scheme, you were implemented, and there wasn’t a chance in hell you’d let seven literal children go wander off into what was essentially the Pit of Sarlacc.

“But you saw It,” Beverly said – quietly, trying to reason you out. She was standing in the corner of the room, arms crossed

over her brown overalls. You liked Beverly. She had a soft face and smart eyes. “Most grown-ups don’t. That means something, it has to, I just *feel* it. And It knew your name – how could a person have known your name?”

You shrugged. It was disturbing, that’s for sure, but it wasn’t too much of a reach to think the freak was digging through the town’s mail or something. Something. *Anything*.

“Who knows? Small town. I’ve been back for a bit, word gets around.”

“But It s-said something to you,” Bill speaking now, standing in solidarity beside Bev. You hadn’t noticed his stutter before. “S-something about C-city Hall.”

That was...true. You swallowed hard. Your throat hurt. You hoped you weren’t catching a cold. That’d be the cherry on top of the surreal sundae. “Sure. It’s creepy, but I had said it earlier in the day and maybe...” you stopped. Because you hadn’t said it. You had *thought* it. You brushed it off. Had to be something. Anything.

“Look, you all are going home now, before it gets dark.” You were using your best Ms. Responsible Adult voice. *I can drive! I can vote! I somewhat understand taxes! I’m in debt! I am perfectly qualified to handle this situation!* “I’m gonna go home and call the cops. Which is what you all *should’ve* done a long time ago. And if any of you try to stop me, I’m telling your parents.”

Pande-fucking-monium. Seven heated preteens shouting at once. *How dare you tell me not to endanger my goddamn life! You’re not my real mom!* You threw your hands up.

“NO. Not hearing it. Home. Now.” You turned, pumping yourself up for your dramatic exit, when Bill’s voice stopped you.

“Y-Y/N,” he said. From the way he carried himself, and the way the other kids gravitated around him, you assumed that – before you had crashed the party - he had been the defacto leader of what they called the “Losers’ Club”. His eyes alone seemed too mature for his face. “Bev’s right. It means something that you sawIt and lived.

You're supposed to be here with us. I can't explain it..." He looked to his friends for support. They were all nodding solemnly. "...I just know. You're a part of the Loser's Club."

"Ka-tet," The words dripped from your mouth before you had even registered the thought. You frowned.

"Ka-*what*?" Stan asked.

"Sounds Jew-y," Richie muttered. Stan smacked him over the head.

"Ka-tet...It means one made of many. A group of people bound by destiny." You looked down. That dizzy feeling was coming back – the bubbling clamoring of forgotten memories. "I must have read that somewhere. I don't remember."

You looked up to seven pairs of eyes. "Home." You repeated. "Now."

And with that you left.

~

You slammed the door behind you. After double bolting it, you dedicated the next thirty minutes to checking the locks on every window and every door in the house. Satisfied that you were alone, and that the house was as good as Fort Knox (better even, because you definitely had pizza rolls in the freezer, and couldn't say for sure that Fort Knox did), you went to the kitchen.

The long shadows of sunset stretched out from the horizon and poured through the window where you were standing, bathing the room in bright orange glow. Your hands shook slightly as you rotated the dial on your phone – you didn't know what the fuck to even say. "*Hi Officer, I met a clown down in the sewer today – haha, weird, I know, you know how Monday's are -, and seven kids are convinced he's the child eating anti-Christ, so maybe send a car or two down to check that out?*" You felt stupid. It had happened, sure, but being home now, where not a dust bunny was out of place, gave the whole situation a detached feeling of unreality.

The receiver was cold against your ear. You twirled the cord in your free hand.

It rang once.

“911 dispatch, what is your emergency?” The line crackled to life with a gruff male voice on the other end.

“Uh, this is gonna sound a little weird,” You said, a slight shake to your voice. You were nervous. *God dammit*. So much for the Ms. Responsible Adult act. “But I was approached by a *really* strange man today – and I think he might be connected to the disappearances happening lately.”

“Can you describe the suspect ma’am?”

“Uh – well – It’s strange, like I said, but he was dressed as a clown.”

“Was he hot?”

You stopped. Blinked.

“Excuse me?”

“The clown, ma’am,” the voice on the phone continued. The gruff tone had grown ever slightly higher. “Was he hot?”

Your head was spinning. Searing dread burst in your chest and dripped down to your stomach, filling you like molten lead. “*Hot?*”

“Hot. *Fuckable*, ma’am. I’m asking if you thought the clown was fuckable.” The voice had gotten higher. Lighter.

“I –I – “

“I’m gonna need you to calm down, ma’am. This is really important. We need this for records.”

“No!” You screeched. “No he wasn’t *hot*! He was fucking

terrifying!”

“Oh, well,” Lighter and higher, increasingly ridiculous. There was a delighted, amused tone to the voice now. “Don’t be so sure! You haven’t seen him dance ye – T !”

Your eyes stared blankly out onto the wall, the white paint on fire with the glow of sunset. *This can’t be real. Something. Anything.* The cold voice on the phone giggled – giggled in *It’s* voice.

“And how are my *tasty* little friends? You met them, didn’t you? They’re so delicious at that age, you know – did they tell you about Georgie, Y/N? Did they tell you about how Georgie FLOATS?”

You screamed. You dropped the phone, but the voice was all around you now – permeating from the fiery walls themselves. Bells were chiming inside your head. Bells that sounded terribly familiar.

“YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT FLOATING, DON’T YOU, Y/N OF NEW YORK? OR DO YOU STILL NOT REMEMBER?”

Your knees gave out and you hit the ground, scrambling back until your shoulders hit the oven and you were stopped. The phone swung wildly from its cord like a pendulum – scarlet blood was gushing from the receiver, spilling across the cabinets and tiled floor, leaving dark red Rorschach splotches everywhere it splattered. *That’s never gonna come out*, you thought, absurdly. *Mr. Clean himself would take one look and tell me I’m fucked.*

The house vibrated with the wild laugh of the clown.

And then it stopped.

Everything stopped. The bells. The blood. The phone was back on its hook. The floor was clean.

You stayed where you were, knees drawn tight to your chest, breathing hard, until the fiery glow of sunset was wiped from the walls and replaced with the cool blue of night time. Eventually you stood. You walked over to the phone.

On the yellow legal pad you kept on the counter, there was a

note.

It read:

**Ms. Responsible Adult,**

**So sorry I couldn't come in person –munching on children takes up so much time, you see! If you ever manage to get hired at a full time job (doubtful), you'll understand. Please leave Derry at once. Trying to stop me is futile. If you don't, I'll rip apart your tiny new friends limb from limb while you watch, and it'll be all your fault! Oh, and then I'll eat you too :)**

**Have a great day!**

**—Pennywise the Dancing Clown.**

**(P.S., You look adorable when you fear for your life!)**

With all the strength you had left, you hurled the pad against the wall. It smacked hard, and then bounced against the pristine tile floor.

Your liberal arts degree had *not* prepared you for this.

You didn't sleep that night. You sat in a strategic corner where you could see most of the house, curled up with a baseball bat – a small, useless comfort. You imagined the mocking voice of It – or Pennywise, as he had referred to himself in the note - *“Oh, Y/N, how did you know my one true weakness is America's favorite pastime? I see Eddie Murray in my nightmares!”* You wouldn't have been able to sleep if you wanted to. You were sure you would hear those damn bells in your dreams.

The next day, you found the Losers Club – your Ka-tet, as you've come to think of them, even though you still didn't really understand where that word came from – down at the quarry.

“Y/N?” Ben said, the first to spot you. Everyone turned.

“I'm in.” You said. “Let's go get this fucker.”

### 3. Chapter 3

“There it is,” Mike said, pointing towards the charred house down the block.

You had insisted you take a full day to scope the place out before adventuring in. The gang were on bikes, you on foot. The house loomed undaunted on the horizon.

“Hell,” You said quietly. Eddie nodded, taking a deep huff from his inhaler. Even from here, the house radiated evil. All your doubt from yesterday was gone. Pennywise the Dancing Clown was real, and he lived here. You felt it.

“I don’t know about this guys,” Stan said, nervousness thick in his voice. You had spent the entire day with your ka-tet, telling them what had happened last night (omitting the *I’m asking if you thought the clown was fuckable* part – it had skeeved you out so bad, you couldn’t bear repeating it), and making plans.

“We have to.” Bill said simply. Stan didn’t respond.

And it was true. Every member of the group knew it. You had to try. You had been against it at first, too – of course – but your options were limited. If you tried to get outside help, Pennywise would stop you. If you did nothing, kids would continue to die. And if you went in there?

Well, odds were high that you’d be killed. Another missing poster to decorate the town’s fences, your bones recycled as toothpicks for Pennywise the Hungry Hungry Hippo. Or, even worse, *you’d* live, and the kids would be killed. You didn’t want to lead them in there – like some sort of homicidal Pied Piper – but the Losers Club was all you had. “If you don’t come with us, we’d just go by ourselves anyway,” Beverly had said earlier. “If something happens, it’s not your fault.”

But it *would* be your fault, you thought grimly. Pennywise’s mocking note came to mind – *I’ll rip apart your tiny new friends’ limb from limb while you watch, and it’ll be all your fault!* It made your heart twist. This shit was way too heavy for these kids to be dealing with – hell,



too heavy for anyone to be dealing with – but it was the ka-tet or bust. Plus, you had your own motives. You needed answers. Whatever was happening with your missing Derry memories – whatever the reason you kept saying words you didn't know, and hearing bells in your head – Pennywise was at the center of it. He knew something about you that you didn't.

Ben unfurled the town map you had all been pouring over earlier, pointed to a spot drawn over in red pen. "There," he said, holding it up for you to see. "The well is there. It should be in the basement."

"Okay," You breathed out, trying to gather your nerves. The kids trusted you, dammit, the least you could do was pretend to be brave. "Okay. We all go home. We rest up. We meet back here tomorrow morning, so we have the light. We stick to the plan, we try our best."

"Excellent speech, my esteemed colleague!" Richie said. "I for one feel super motivated. Is that what Jim Jones said to his cult before they all drank the Kool-Aid?"

"Beep beep Richie," Bill said. Richie snorted. He was scared. They all were.

"Here's what I don't understand," Stan said, turning to you. "It took different forms for all of us, turned into whatever scares us the most. But It was just a clown for you. Why's that? Are you afraid of clowns, like Richie?"

"It only takes other forms for *virgins!*" Richie said, punching Stan's arm. Stan yelped and shot him an annoyed look. "Y/N and I are the only experienced ones here." Richie winked at you. You rolled your eyes. He was thirteen, alright.

"I mean, I don't *love* clowns, but who does?" You crossed your arms. "He's plenty scary just the way he is."

"I'm sure It'd love to hear that," Mike said dryly.

"No, I think it's important." Bev said. "I don't know what it means, but I think it's important...maybe it's a grown-up thing?"

"For the last time – I'm not a grown-up!" The kids all looked up at

you with the same skeptical expression. It was kind of cute – they had picked up each other’s mannerisms. You shook your head. It was useless.

“Plan,” you said. “We meet back here, seven am tomorrow.”

With a nod from Bill, the group took off. You gave the house one last look before walking away yourself.

At home, you immediately crashed on the couch. Having not slept in at least 24 hours, you wanted nothing more than to be dead to the world for a full night. Hell, you might literally be dead to the world in another 24 hours. You might not even make it that far – what was stopping Pennywise from snapping your neck while you dreamt? *Here lies Y/N; Daughter, Friend, and Pied Piper to the Losers Club. She never did get a real job.* Your hands were tied - you were hopelessly, frustratingly human, and you needed to sleep.

Besides, that wasn’t his style. He wanted to torment you. This very second, he was probably running circles in his burnt down crack house, setting up child-sized mouse traps, blowing up gruesome balloon animals, cackling to himself while he tested out his fog machine and flossed his tiny dagger teeth. You gave a dark laugh at the mental image, thinking of the demon giving himself affirmations in a dirty, cracked mirror. *You are in control of your own destiny. You’re so goddamn scary. You’re the scariest clown around, yes you are! Old McDonald’s got nothing on you!* The motherfucker was theatrical.

You didn’t have time to dwell on the thought; heavy sleep had wrapped around you and dragged you down with greedy eagerness.

Bells. The same sharp, clear bells you had been hearing throughout the day – no, throughout your *life* – were chiming in your head. Deafening.

You were dreaming.

At first it was nothing but the incoherent jumble of light sleep. Then you saw a priest, with a cross carved into his wrinkled forehead. “Check your money!” The priest said. “Always check your money

when you go *Todash*, so you know which world you're in!" You saw the yellow raincoat you had worn the previous day, gliding in a lonely loop like a ghost. The middle school you had attended briefly when you had lived in Derry before. An old, John Wayne looking man in a cowboy hat – he was missing two fingers on his right hand – he had Bill's blue bombardier eyes.

A chorus of children were singing.

*"Come-come-commala, rice come a-falla,"*

The dream grew heavy. The bells vibrated through your skull.

You were in Derry – only it wasn't Derry yet – it was just a settlement, filled with villagers, all dressed up in bonnets and slacks and faded shawls. Pennywise was there, dancing on a wooden pop-up stage to the absolute delight of squealing, dirt-smeared children. *No!* You wanted to scream. *Don't get close to him!* They couldn't hear you, couldn't see you. Pennywise could. He stared you down, twirling in grand, sloppy circles, throwing his too-long arms over his head, clicking his red puff-adorned boots together. His wide blue eyes never left yours. *Scream all you like*, those eyes seemed to say.

*"Come-come-commala, rice come a-falla, I-sissa 'ay a-bralla, Dey come a-folla"*

Derry again, only now it was a town. Charred and smoking Easter Eggs littered the town square. Someone was crying. Pennywise again, staring you down, dancing.

And again, in a different time. Again. Again. Again. The scenes flashed before you in rapid succession like a clicking projector. Derry throughout the years, always with Pennywise there, always dancing.

"Do you remember the first time you went *Todash*?" The clown said, laughing deliriously as he spun. "It was when you lived here! I was sleeping, of course, but still I felt you. The teeny grubby larva version of the human I had seen throughout time. You've been going *Todash* ever since, Y/N of New York. How delightful you're finally here in the flesh. The warm, *delicious* flesh." He was right, you

knew, he was right. Ever since you had lived in Derry – throughout all your time in New York – you’ve been visiting the town throughout the ages in your dreams, going *Todash*, witnessing the horror first hand. How had you forgotten?

Then the singing stopped. The scene snapped to black.

The man in the cowboy hat, with the missing fingers and blue shooter’s eyes, stood before you. A man you would never meet – a man from a different world. The Sheriff of whatever fucked up universe Pennywise had crawled out from.

“You’re strong with the touch,” he said. A cigarette burned in his mouth. “Let’s hope it’s enough.”

“What’s going on?” You begged, desperate tears in your eyes. Your head was boiling; your mind was ripping itself apart. “Please, *help me.*”

“I can’t help you, but your ka-tet can,” The man shrugged, almost disinterested. “We all have roles to play on the path to the Tower. Yours is here.” The man leaned in close. He really did look like an older version of Bill. “Listen,” he said. He began to recite a poem.

It went:

*“See the TURTLE of Enormous Girth / On his shell he holds the Earth. / His thought is slow, but always kind / He holds us all within his mind / On his back all vows are made / He sees the truth but mayn’t aid / He loves the land and loves the sea / And even loves a child like me.”*

You snapped awake.

It was morning. Blinding beams of white hot sunrise enveloped the room. Lazy bird song sounded from outside. The dream immediately dispersed like dust swimming in the light, receding back into your subconscious. You couldn’t remember all of it – *but enough*, you thought. *I remember enough.*

It was show time.

You met back up with the gang, a wide berth from the Neibolt house.

You had armed yourselves as best you could with what little material you had at your disposal – most of the kids held rusted pikes pulled from the evil house's gate. Mike had a bolt shooter strapped to his hip. You carried your baseball bat from the night before. *Let's see if you really are afraid of Eddie Murray, bitch.*

The group was quiet as you stood, huddled together, at the house's front entrance. Up close now, you could see graffiti plastered around the edges of the old walls and along the surrounding fences. Most were various curses and graffiti name tags. "All hail the Crimson King!" one said, with a swirly, bright red eye underneath it. "Beware the walking dude!" said another.

"Well," Ben said. "We're here."

"Yep, sure are," Richie answered. "We really doing this, huh?"

"Yes," Bill said, with grim determination. "We really are."

"Okay guys," You said, running your free hand through your hair. You pointed the end of your bat at the group. "Remember. We stick together. No man left behind and all that, alright?"

Everyone nodded.

You turned. Faced the massive, unimpressed door that led into what you had previously thought of as the Pit of Sarlacc. This was it, your one last chance to high-tail your ass home, to leave Derry forever, to go back to New York and forgot this whole god forsaken thing. You could go back to school. Get your Masters. Why the rush to grow up, anyway?

You pushed the door open, and with you in the lead, eight beating hearts crossed the threshold.

The door clanged shut behind you.

The house was filthy, littered with yellowed newspapers, broken beer bottles and crushed packets of Marlboro Reds. Dust swam in the air, thick as the cobwebs that were strung from every corner and beam like party streamers. The floorboards were crooked, most peeling up

at the edges and some completely caved in. A large, dark staircase led up into blackness to your left. To your right was an equally dark hallway, spinning out into the depths of the house.

“This is *disgusting*,” Eddie grunted, “I’m gonna catch the Plague just breathing this stuff.”

“Damn, crazy clown man,” Richie said with a nervous giggle. “I love the crack house aesthetic. How method of you.”

“Shut the fuck up Richie,” Mike said, forgoing the *Beep Beep* formality.

“Okay.” Beverly said, holding her pike in two sturdy hands. You marveled at her bravery. It was almost like she had done this before – you got the sinking feeling that Bev had seen some shit in her young life. “Right or left?”

Before anyone could answer, a blazing blue floodlight hummed to life. The staircase was illuminated like a black light. Standing in the middle of the stairs, one leg propped up in a perfect Captain Morgan pose, was Pennywise.

The kids yelped and jumped – you whipped around to face the stairs and felt the kids pull tightly together behind you. The clown, bathed in blue, grinned widely.

“Well, well, well!” Pennywise said – his voice boomed throughout the house. He had a microphone in his right hand, held up to his black mouth. Rivers of thick drool gushed from behind yellow buck teeth, coating his chin and the frills of his costume, splattering against his shoes. “Let’s meet our new contestants, here on *Who Wants to Live to See Tomorrow?*”

Oh, this should be good.

“First up, we have a buh-buh-buh-“ The clown smacked himself across the face, hard, making his big fishbowl eyes spin in circles. *God, he really is fucking crazy.* “Billy-boy! The one with the delicious brother!”

You heard Bill take in a sharp breath behind you.

“No worries, Billy-boy! If you win the game, you get to live, and if you lose, you and Georgie can float together *forever!*”

“Eat shit, forehead!” Richie screamed from behind you – and before you could stop him, he had hurled his pike across the room, straight towards the clown.

So quick you nearly missed it, Pennywise bent over backwards, feet straight in the air, caught himself on his hands one step below where he had been standing, then pushed himself back up, landing on the banister of the staircase, perched like a cat. It would have been impressive had it been performed by literally anyone else. The microphone dropped to the ground and the room vibrated with its whining feedback. The pike missed – but only narrowly. Richie had a good arm.

“*Beep Beep, Richie!*” The clown screamed, his voice high and scratching. “That’s against the rules! You’re all *unfair!*”

*What fucking rules!?* Your terrified mind screamed. *Where’s the referee!?*

He snapped his gloved fingers, and suddenly your hands were empty. The bat was gone. You turned – every pike, and even Mike’s bolt shooter, was gone.

“No more introductions!” The clown’s face was contorted in a horrible grimace, his body was heaving with ragged, angry breaths. “The game has started!”

The blue light flickered out, and Pennywise went with it.

“What the fuck are we supposed to do now!?” Stan screamed. Panic was thick in the air.

“The well,” Ben said. “We have to get to the well. We *have* to.”

“With no weapons?” Mike said. “Not-uh. We need to regroup. We need to –” He stopped. He had turned, ready to run for the front door, but the front door was gone. There was nothing but wall where it once stood. Spray painted across it were these words: *Missing: Seven kids and one adorable grown-up. Answers to “The Losers Club”. Reward*

*offered. They're stupid and slow, but I love them anyway!*

Half of the group screamed.

*"Everyone calm down!"* You and Bill yelled simultaneously. You shot each other a quick, confused glance. You motioned with your hand, as if to say; *Oh no, by all means, you go.*

"This is what It w-wants," Bill said. "It w-wants us divided. It's not real, guys – n-nothing it does is real. Our weapons are around the house somewhere. W-we just have to find them."

The group calmed a bit. The tension eased. You thanked whatever God there was for blessing you with Bill Denbrough. *Thank the turtle of enormous girth, I guess.* You drew a shaky breath.

"Common, Bill and Ben are right," You said. "Let's go."

The Losers Club made their way down the hallway. The stairs leading to the basement had to be down there somewhere. Rats scattered and squeaked as you made your way, slowly, moving as one giant, eight headed unit.

"Ben, you're hurting my arm!" Richie hissed in the dark.

"What? I'm not touching your arm."

"Don't fuck with me!"

"I'm not!"

"Guys, quit it!" You hissed back, whipping around, and –

Gone. The kids were gone.

*Oh, fuck.*

You felt your stomach drop out from under you. The world spun. You lifted your arms in the air in a feeble attempt to steady yourself.

You were in a long, dark room. You turned back around to find nothing but wall. A clicking sound behind you. Slowly, dreadfully,



you looked. At the end of the long dark room, a single naked bulb hung from the ceiling. Underneath it's light, a grand piano.

And draped across it like a burlesque dancer, lying on his side, head propped up in one hand, was Pennywise.

"I *warned* you. I gave you a chance, Y/N," Pennywise said, in that infuriating sing-song voice. His eyes glowed a fearsome golden. The edges of his hair were a bright red fire. The light cast the rest of him in shadow. The keys of the piano began to press down by unseen hands, and that carnival music you had heard by the river began to fill the room. "*I don't give chances.*"

"Your note?" You said, your voice sounding as weak as you felt. "Y-yeah, I got it. It was cute."

Pennywise let out a deep, guttural growl. In one movement, he hopped from the piano and hit the ground with a thud. His face was completely in the shadows now, his lanky silhouette the only visible proof he was still there at all. The circus music continued.

In time to the beat, he took long strides towards you, one leg crossing in front of the other, shaking his hands like a jazz-dancer. He covered the distance with terrifying swiftness, until he was just inches away.

You squeaked in fear, a pathetic noise. Two giant gloved hands grabbed your neck and hoisted you off of your feet, bringing you to eye level with the clown. You gasped, kicked your feet wildly, but it was useless. His grasp was like ironwork.

"You're too damn old!" He snarled, eyes burrowing into your very soul. His breath smelt like Laffy Taffy. *Seven, Halloween, lacy frills coated in vomit.* You gaged. "You're too damn old to stop me!"

"And you," you huffed, wrapping your own hands around his to support yourself as well as you could. "You want me gone. Because you're not *scary* enough."

The clown screamed in your face, a bizarre Banshee sound, and shoved you against the wall. Hard. You heard a click as your head smacked against the wood. Sudden nausea exploded in your gut.

"I'm right!" You yelled, pushing against his waist with weak legs to try and balance yourself against the surface behind you, dragging in desperate breaths. "That's why you eat kids! That's why you don't turn into anything when you see me! You're not scary enough!"

The clown's mouth was open, revealing shark-like rows of sharp, jagged teeth. His brow furrowed and his lips turned up in a wicked grin.

"So, you've seen me dance," he whispered. "Have you changed your mind?"

*What?* You thought. Then it came back – the phone call to the police. *You haven't seen him dance ye-T!* Slowly, he leaned in until his head was in the crook of your neck. You felt hot breath against your face and suppressed a scream. The clown took in a deep sniff, and his entire body rippled in a shudder. "Sweet fear," he murmured, pure, slick ecstasy in his voice. "Oh, sweet fear."

You felt something wet against your throat. A huge tongue had slithered out of the clown's mouth like a snake, and was being dragged against your sweaty neck. This time you did scream.

"*Oh ho ho ho ho!*" His golden, bloodshot eyes drifted in opposite directions. His tongue was hot – so hot it was nearly burning – and it traveled from your neck to the side of your face. He released his hold on your neck and immediately grabbed the sides of your hips, pushing his body on top of yours to keep you pinned in place. The sudden warmth of the closeness radiated through you. You tried to use your newly freed hands to push against him – nothing.

His tongue retreated back into his mouth, and he lifted his head so he was nose to nose with you. His left hand grabbed the side of your face and tilted your face up. Bells jingled as he moved.

"You want answers," he hissed. "You don't know what's going on, *not really*, and that's the only reason you're still alive. You'd be smart to remember that." He was angry – genuinely angry. It was almost a relief, compared to the erratic, delighted blood-thirsty act he usually presented.

Everything very suddenly went fuzzy. You felt your thoughts drift lazily away. *He's poisoned me*, you thought, in a hazy panic – and then that thought, too, drifted. The world had tilted, gone soft. *Where am I? What's happening?* Your lips parted in a meek groan. The hand on your face moved – he slipped his thumb into your open mouth. The fabric of his glove scratched against your tongue. He pushed it further, gliding it across your tongue, and slowly pulled it back out.

And then his mouth was on yours. It was a crushing, suffocating kiss. His tongue was burning inside your mouth. *Here lies Y/N; Daughter, Friend, Clown Kisser. She never did get a real job.*

You couldn't see properly. Couldn't think. There was nothing but the warmth of the body pressed so tightly against yours, the pressure oddly comforting. Long fingers from the hand on your face ran through your hair. Shivers pulsed through your body. He was petting you. Subduing you. *Who's a good girl?*

You were floating.

You liked it.

“Come with me,” the voice of Pennywise, deeper than usual, purred against your mouth. “Come with me, and float forever.”

It was so goddamn tempting. You were sick of fighting, sick of being afraid. Why bother? Why even try, when you could stay just like this – floating?

In your muted, underwater-like view of the scene, you heard a muffled yell. *That's annoying*, you thought.

Then it was gone. The mouth, the warmth. You slid down the wall and hit the floor with a thump. You whined from the sudden lack of contact.

Almost immediately you came back to yourself. Your senses sharpened at a dizzying speed. Pennywise was standing in front of you, stock still, head turned to the side like an attentive dog, eyes vacant. The yell sounded again.

Oh, my god, it was *Beverly!*

“You,” Pennywise said, slowly rocking his head back in place, looking at you with wide, dilated eyes. He wagged a finger in an exaggerated, condescending manner. “You will have to wait - T.”

With a loud honking noise, he vanished. There was a puddle of confetti where he once stood.

*Wait, what the ever loving FUCK!?*

You allowed yourself three full seconds to bite back the bile that had bubbled up in your throat. You tried to ignore the heat that had pooled in your lower belly. You didn't have time to process what just happened. Your ka-tet needed you.

You stood; the room was completely empty again. No light, no piano, no music. You groped along the wall until – yes! A doorknob. You turned it.

It led to a tiny, circular room. It was bare except for two doors. Something was written in fresh, dripping blood on both of them. From left to right:

***Escape from City Hall***

***Back to your Babies***

Underneath the latter was crude, bloody finger painting of a mother duck, followed by seven headless ducklings.

Did you trust the clown to be telling the truth? Absolutely not.

Did you have to try?

You barreled through the second door, nearly knocking over a terrified Eddie.

“JESUS FUCKING CHRIST!” He screamed, swinging a broken bottle wildly. Its sharp edges missed your face by a hair.

“FUCK!” you yelled, fist pulled back in a knee jerk reaction. You were straight up ready to knock Eddie's lights out. Realizing who it was, you grabbed the younger kid's shoulders roughly. “Eddie! Eddie, are

you okay!?”

Relieved tears welled up in the kids big doe eyes. He dropped the bottle with a clank and threw himself into your arms. You hugged him tightly, lifting him off the ground. You felt his heart beat fiercely against your own.

“It was in the fucking fridge, Y/N! All curled up like a fucking jack-in-the-box!” The kid cried into your shoulder. He was taking long, sucking breaths. You put him down; he pulled out his inhaler and huffed with shaking hands.

“Eddie, we have to find the others,” you said, trying your best to give off a cool, steady demeanor - like you hadn’t just been sucking face with their would-be murderer. Ms. Responsible Adult. “Where are they?”

*“Hell if I fucking know!”* He wiped away fat tears. *“I wanna go home!”*

Despite the fear, despite the adrenaline pumping mad circuits through your system, you felt your heart break, holding the shaking shoulders of Eddie before you. He was just a kid. *Your* kid. You were a shit Mrs. Frizzle – this field trip sucked.

Pennyfucker the Shit-Eating Clown was gonna pay for making him cry.

“Common,” you said, grabbing Eddie by the hand and jogging with him down the twisty hall you had found yourself in.

## 4. Chapter 4

“I’m just saying, like, maybe we should go back and get some acetaminophen and ibuprofen. I’ve only got hand sanitizer in my fanny pack and that was like, a major oversight on my part. There are so many sharp things to cut yourself on here, and I’m sure it’s all covered in years’ worth of bacteria, we could get Sepsis – that’s a blood infection – and that’s *really* bad!”

Eddie hadn’t stopped rambling since you’d found him. You got the feeling he was a nervous talker.

“My mom told me this story of a guy who cut himself on a knife at Cracker Barrel and got an infection that got all gunked up and he had to have his whole hand *amputated* –“

“Eddie,” You interrupted, pointing to the ground.

Lying by your feet was your baseball bat and one rusted pike. You dropped the kid’s hand, scooped up the bat quickly and held out the pike for Eddie. It was a suspicious, but welcomed sight none the less.

“What was the point of the fucking map?” Eddie muttered, taking the pike from you. He had calmed down a bit. “The house just keeps changing!”

“I know,” you answered. ***Eddie Murray ain’t shit :)*** had been carved into your weapon. You almost laughed. The pair of you continued down the hall, which led to a single door. You were getting real sick of doors. Tacked onto the frame with a rusty nail was a note:

***Contestants Two and Six,***

***I’ve returned your little toys to you. I already gave the others theirs, so it was only fair. You’ll need them for this next one. Good luck!***

***Love, Pennywise.***

“Cool, great, awesome,” Eddie spat, having read the note over your shoulder. “How about we just turn around? Like, just leave this one for later.”

You were inclined to agree, when a loud gong reverberated from behind the door. You jumped.

It continued, ringing in a slow, deep rhythm. The image of giant cathedral bells being sounded in an ancient town came to mind. Or a funeral procession. After three gongs, deep, bass-boosted music joined in. The door vibrated in its frame from the noise. *Thump thump thump* went the drums. You could feel them through your shoes and deep in your chest. It was like being in the front row of a concert that was about to begin. *And now, on the main stage, Pennywise the Rocking Clown!* A guitar whined. Of all the things you had been through, this was easily the most unsettling. Your skin crawled, your heart beat doubled.

“Seriously?” you said. “He has his own *mood* music? Who’s doing the pyrotechnics? What’s the fucking production value for this fun house?”

“Wait, Y/N,” Eddie said, tugging on your arm. “I know this song,” his eyes were wide, glued to the throbbing door. “It’s *Hells Bells*. AC/DC.”

You recognized the tune immediately. He was right – only the song had been sped up to twice its normal speed.

From beneath the music, you heard a distant screech. It was the same noise you had heard while Pennywise was pushing his tongue down your throat (speaking of unsanitary, you wondered what Eddie would prescribe for *that*).

Beverly.

You and Eddie exchanged a knowing glance, then pushed the door open and ran through.

*My lightning’s flashing, across the sky! You’re only young, but you’re gonna die!*

Your concert idea wasn’t far off. Inside was a huge, empty ballroom. Light gray fog rolled along the polished floors and wrapped around your legs, reaching up to Eddie’s waist. *This motherfucker legitimately got a fog machine*, you thought incredulously. *He took his happy ass to*

*Party City and bought himself a fucking fog machine. Excuse me, sir, which machine would you recommend for my murder house? I want the kiddies to know I really put effort into presentation before slicing their throats open.* The room was dark as a coffin, expect for the pulsating blue, pink, red and green lights that flashed on and off, illuminating the room for split seconds at a time before plunging back into nothingness. A rave from hell. In the pink flash, you saw Beverly, Stan, Ben and Richie. They were in the middle of the room, pulled together in a tight circle with their backs to each other, holding their pikes out against unseen enemies.

And standing in the far corner of the room – a few feet up, tapping his feet rapidly on a stage (where the lights were flashing from) – was Pennywise.

*I won't take no prisoners, won't spare no lives, nobody's putting up a fight!*

"Guys!" You screamed over the music. Your throat stung from the effort. The kids all looked to you with shell-shocked expressions. Pennywise let out a delighted screech.

"Oh look, contestants, – it's my girlfriend and germ-boy!" He sung into the microphone in his right hand. "Too bad they won't do you *any* good!" He cackled, smacking his huge boots faster against the stage, swinging his head – his hair blue, pink, red, green - headbanging to the beat like Ian Gillan.

## **G I R L F R I E N D ! ?**

*I got my bell, I'm gonna take you to hell, I'm gonna get you, Satan get cha!*

"Watch out!" Stan yelled. The kid's curly hair was smeared flat against his head, he was coated in some dark liquid – they all were.

*Watch out for wha –*

There was a dark flash of movement to your right, followed by Eddie's high pitched scream. A tarantula the size of a German Shepard had sprung from the fog and lunged for him with dripping



fangs. Its spindly legs spasmed as it tried to wrap itself around the squirming kid. Eddie had dropped his pike in surprise.

“Eddie!” You heard Richie shriek in pure terror.

“No you fucking don’t!” You grunted, swinging your bat over your head and bringing it down with all your strength against the thing’s fuzzy abdomen. Your bat connected hard, sending the spider splattering to the ground. It let out a clicking, screeching cry, its legs jerking wildly in the foggy air. You gave a grunt of effort and swung once more. The middle of the spider exploded open like the world’s worst piñata, splattering you and Eddie in dark, sticky liquid.

“Ker-pow! Right outta the park! Mrs. Frizzle scores a homerun!” Pennywise hooted. You had never heard such twisted pleasure in a voice before. The clown was still dancing, wailing along to the song’s solo passionately with an air guitar. Blue, pink, red, green. He was having the time of his unnatural life.

*I’ll give you black sensations up and down your spine, if you’re into evil you’re a friend of mine!*

Eddie quickly regained his composure - you noticed with a sharp pang of pride - grabbing his pike and jumping into a defensive position. He wiped the goo from his eyes with the back of one hand.

“If this shit infects me, my mom’s gonna fucking kill you!” He screamed. The clown didn’t respond.

*Hell’s Bells! Yeah, Hell’s Bells! You got me ringing, Hell’s Bells!*

With a boiling rage, you realized that if you survived, you were never gonna be able to listen to AC/DC again.

You loved AC/DC.

“Kids!” You squawked. You were losing your voice. “To me!”

The group began to half jog, half run towards you. You and Eddie managed to meet them half way. Together, you made your way back to the door – batting and stabbing at the spiders that occasionally jumped up from the fog. The clown’s *Oh ho ho ho!* Laughter followed

you. Eventually – covered in the creatures’ hot blood – you ran through the door and slammed it behind you.

You had all made it back to the hallway. The second the door clicked shut the music stopped. It left a ringing whine deep in your ears.

The group took a collective sigh of relief.

“Oh, thank fuck,” you said. You had reached a point of physical and mental exhaustion you didn’t know was possible. Tears stung in your eyes. You knew that while you had been separated, Pennywise had put all your kids through their own personalized hell. You took each of them one by one, squeezing them in a protective bear-hug and planting fat kisses on their foreheads.

For a minute, you all sat together on the dirty floor, breathing. Eddie passed around the hand sanitizer from his fanny pack.

“So,” Richie said, one arm thrown around Eddie’s shoulder. His glasses were askew on his face, a long crack in the left lens. “I know what I’m writing my summer experience essay on.”

“We have to find Bill and Mike,” Beverly said, running a shaking hand through her fiery curls. “It said contestants One and Four were much closer to winning the game than us.”

“They have to be closer to the well,” Ben said. “We have to find it.”

“This is too much!” Stan cried. “We were not prepared for this. It’s too strong. We need to get out of here before we’re all killed!”

“No,” You said, drumming your fingers along your baseball bat. You realized you were tapping to the beat of *Hells Bells*. You stopped. “It’s not as strong when we’re together.”

“We can’t leave without Bill and Mike!” Beverly cried, slamming one fist against the floor.

“Of course not. We won’t.” You took a breath. “But Stan’s right – we didn’t know what we were getting into, not really. Now we do. We find Bill and Mike, and we get out of here. We regroup.” You looked up to the others. “Sound like a plan?”

The kids all looked to each other – holding silent palaver among themselves. *No grown-ups allowed!* They turned back to you and nodded.

Your journey continued.

For a while, nothing happened. Your ka-tet minus two made their way through countless empty hallways with nothing but the occasional squeaking rat for company. You all chattered among each other, talking about nothing and everything, anything to fill the oppressive silence. You recited the poem the man with the missing fingers in your dream had told you, the kids listening in respectful quiet. It seemed to calm everyone down. “*See the TURTLE of enormous girth....*”

Behind innumerable doors was nothing but more doors, with the occasional bricked wall of a dead end. You turned every knob with dread blossoming in your gut, thinking; *this one, he’s gonna be behind this one, he’s gonna pop out and pie me in the face.*

But he never was. The quiet, you thought, was worse than the action.

“Hey, I have a question,” Richie said after some time. He had taken off his cracked glasses.

“Shoot,” you answered.

“Are we gonna talk about how It called you its girlfriend?”

Your face flushed warm. You could still feel the tingle on your lips where the clown’s mouth had been, still felt the ghost of his fingers in your hair. The group had all exchanged stories about what had happened while you’d all been separated – Eddie with the fridge, the others with their Burning Man show – but there was no way in hell you were gonna tell them about your close encounter of the sexual kind.

“Nope,” you said. “No, we’re definitely not.”

“Okay, but like, that answer only makes me more suspicious.”

“Beep beep, Richie.”

Before he could come back with another mortifying, smartass comment, you halted. Ben bumped into Stan.

“Look,” Bev said.

To your right was a narrow staircase, leading down into what was presumably the fun house basement.

“They’re down there,” Ben said. “I feel it.”

You felt it, too. You tightened your grip on the bat.

“Alright kids,” you said. “We’re almost done. Let’s go.”

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

check out the awesome fan art I've received from this chapter! <https://commalaa.tumblr.com/post/166693278294/hey-so-theoneandonlyqueendeth-drew-fanart-of>

## 5. Chapter 5

The stairs led down into the basement.

You and the ka-tet minus two made your way through the dark cellar. Although the room was large and dark as sin, you had the persistent feeling that the well – the well which led down into the sewers, where Pennywise kicked up his feet after a long day of child-eating, – was down here. It was almost too quiet, without so much as the tiny tapping of rat paws to disturb the stillness. It very much felt as though you had entered the lair of a great sleeping beast. The silence made the whine in your ears, caused by Pennywise's impromptu concert, even more apparent. *I wonder if there's a merch counter at the end of all this*, you thought. *I want a tank-top that says "I survived the Neibolt House and all I got was this stupid shirt"*.

"Guys!" a familiar voice rang out from the dark.

Almost immediately Bill came into view, nearly barreling into the group. Bev gave a cry and quickly took him in her arms, hugging him so hard you wondered if he could breathe.

"Bill! Are you okay?" Ben asked.

Bill shook his head rapidly; Bev let him go so he could speak. "We've been through hell – I'll tell you guys later. B-but Mike! Guys, *It has Mike!*"

You looked the boy over quickly – his blue eyes were wide, hair disheveled, but he was in one 5 foot 2 inch piece. No clown bites. Small victory.

"Bill," you said. "What – "

Before you could speak, a scream sounded from the depth of the room. Everyone turned towards it, bringing up their various weapons.

Balancing precariously on the lip of the old well – which had very suddenly appeared in the middle of the room, embedded into the

floor - was Pennywise. Clutched tightly to his chest, face half buried under the lacy frills of the clown's collar, was Mike. His bolt shooter was nowhere to be seen.

"Give him back," you spat, surprised by the ferocity of your own voice. Your nerves were gone – you were just plain fuckin' pissed.

"Hmm," Pennywise tutted, bringing his free hand up to his face in an expression of mock consideration. "No, I don't think I will."

"We'll leave," Stan said quickly, desperately. "Give him back and we'll leave you alone."

The clown barked out a laugh. "Oh, *no no no*, my little friends – it's too late for that! But I grow tired of our game. This one-" He shook Mike with one arm like a ragdoll, causing him to shriek in pain. You realized the kid's right arm was broken, twisting at an unnatural angle. "This one stays for dinner!"

"Go!" Mike yelled from behind the clown's claw like grasp, tears streaming down his puffy face. "Get out of here!"

"*Gooo! Get out of heeereee!*" The clown wailed, scrunching up his face in faux anguish. He gave out a few exaggerated sobs, then used his free hand to dig out a never-ending handkerchief from behind his collar, dabbing it against his giant eyes.

Raging blood pulsed in your ears.

*I'm gonna get you out of here, god dammit, even if it kills me.*

With the idea you had in mind, it just might.

"Take me," you said quietly. The clown's whining immediately ceased. His head turned to you, regarding you with wide animal eyes.

"Y/N, *no*," Bev hissed.

"Take me," you repeated, louder. You let your bat slip from you hand and hit the floor with a rattle. You took four large, deliberate steps towards the well, bringing you a yard away from the clown and a safe distance from the kids. The group behind you gasped. "It's my

fault, just like you said it would be. Let them go and I'll stay."

The clown's head lowered slowly, slightly, considering you as drool dripped with a *tap tap tap* from his mouth onto the stone of the well. There was a ghost of a smile on his wet lips. Mike continued to squirm. Without a word, it threw Mike to the ground – he scrambled as fast as his injury allowed, back into the safety of the group behind you – and in one movement, Pennywise had hoisted you up onto the edge of the well with him.

One of his gloved hands was tight to the back of your neck, like you were a misbehaving kitten, forcing you to stare up into his terrible eyes. You didn't struggle. Drool dripped onto your face and ran down your chin. His ragged teeth flashed in a grin of unbridled delight.

"Alright, kids!" He called, never looking away from you. "You have one minute to leave. The grown-ups would like some alone time."

"F-fuck you!" Bill screamed.

An expression of dark, mischievous glee overcame the clown's face. He broke his stare with you to address the group.

"Fuck *me*?" He squeaked, drool flying from his lips. "Fuck *me*? I don't know about you, Buh Buh Billy boy, but I'm sure she –" he shook you slightly in his grasp, bells jingling as he moved – "would *love* to."

Your heart began a panicky, unnatural rhythm, pounding like the drum line to *Hells Bells*.

"Should have seen her, boys!" The clown continued. The hand around your neck quickly snaked around your waist and pulled you tight to his chest. His free hand ran through your hair, stroking you like a lap dog. "Your little dance chaperone here was *all over me. Begging for it.*" His red mouth opened in a shrill, breathy moan – a perfect impression of your own voice. "But you know all about that, don't you, Bevy?" The clown winked, one glowing orb disappearing briefly from the dark. His tone had dropped into that of an older man's when addressing Beverly – a voice you didn't recognize, but she clearly did. The color had drained from her round face; dark freckles were spread stark against milky skin. Pennywise began

snickering, rocking back and forth on his heels like a not-at-all-apologetic child caught in a prank. You were forced to sway along with him.

*One two three four five six – six – where’s Ben?*

Ben was gone. The clown hadn’t noticed.

“It’s all over, contestants!” The clown went on, blind to the missing child, drowning in his own sick satisfaction. “Contestant Two has won!” He stopped petting you abruptly, pulled you back up to his face; hot Laffy Taffy breath blowing against your neck. He growled into your ear, “Finally realized you belong to me, *hmm?* Good girl.”

You could sense movement from behind the clown. The kids were too quiet. Your mind reeled, quickly piecing it together. *Distraction!* – you could almost hear the entirety of the Losers Club screaming at you in your mind - *Keep him distracted!*

“Yes,” you breathed. The clown’s grin dropped from his face, his hold on you loosened ever so slightly, his expression softened in confusion. “Yours, of course. Haven’t I always been? Always yours.”

You pushed yourself up on your toes and kissed him.

The clown’s arms dropped completely, falling limp to his sides. You grabbed fistfuls of frills from his collar and pulled him down, angling your head back, deepening the kiss. *Lower, lower, have to get him as low as possible.* His entire body shivered in what you assumed was pleasure. One of his hands dug painfully into your back, pressing you into him. You could feel his chest heave against yours. His tongue, burning and wet, eagerly pushed past your lips and forced itself into the back of your mouth. He was hungry, after all. Starving.

*Who’s begging for it now, bitch?*

“Now, Ben!” You heard Mike scream.

You released the clown and ducked, leaping from the well to the floor, careful not to slip, and you made it just in time to see Ben’s pike explode through Pennywise’s skull.



It was a perfect hit.

The clown let out a low, animal groan. The rusted weapon had entered the back of his orange head and gone clean through his right eye. Black blood floated up from the wound, winding its way up into the air where it dissipated. You were transfixed, your heart hammering, your lips burning; mouth coated in clown spit. Pennywise's long tongue was still hanging out from his jaws.

He took one staggering step forward, off the lip of the well and onto the ground with a thud. There was a sickening sound - a bubbling, rattling noise - emitting from the back of his throat. *Death rattle*. He wobbled uncertainly, shaking his head to and fro as if in disbelief. His un-damaged eye rolled in its socket.

"*Run!*" you screamed. You jumped to your feet, grabbed Ben by the hand - who was staring at the clown, frozen in shock - and B-lined back to the group.

"Wait!" Bill said. "We can't leave yet! We can't let it get away!"

Adrenaline pumping, you turned back to look. Pennywise was still staggering on weak legs like a newborn deer, head bobbing on his neck, arms outstretched, clawing at nothing. He wasn't dead, not even close - even now his steps were getting more certain, his bloodshot left eye had stopped its wild roll and was focused on you.

You quickly groped the floor for your discarded bat. Finding it, you stomped back towards the double-overed demon.

"*This is for making my kids cry!*" You screamed, and with a loud *keerack!* the bat made impact against the side of the clown's head. Another burst of blood floated out of his mouth. His long legs gave way and he collapsed to the ground, injured eye bulging gruesomely out of his face.

"*Fuck yeah!* Best baby sitter ever!" Richie yelled, pumping his fist in the air. But Pennywise wasn't out yet. With a sudden burst of lightning speed, the clown began crawling backwards on all fours, the rattling sound getting louder.

*“Fear, fear, fear,”* he muttered, a bit of blood escaping his wound with each repetition.

“Don’t let it get away!” someone called. But it was too late – Pennywise had scaled the wall of the well like a cockroach, and was swallowed into its depths.

~

Half carrying the injured Mike, you and the Losers made your way up the stairs, through the house – which had returned to normal - and out the door into the dark street.

You all collapsed a few paces away. You took in deep, greedy breaths of cool night air, relishing the breeze against your skin.

You were alive.

For now.

Beverly pulled out a bent pack of cigarettes from her pocket. She lit one with shaking hands.

“Nope!” you said, taking it swiftly from her grasp with two fingers. “You did not just almost die for you to kill yourself with *this*,” you popped the cigarette in question into your own mouth and took a deep inhale.

“Seriously?”

“Grown-up,” you grunted.

The next few hours of your life were a surreal blur – perhaps more surreal than the Neibolt house had been. Because now you were back in Derry, Maine, where absolutely nothing in particular was out of order. Crickets chirped, the moon shone, cars full of upstanding citizens made their way back to their quiet suburb homes.

You all had a lot of decompressing to do – but first came the business.

The Losers took Mike to his door step while you hung back down the

street and waited, having gone through half of Beverly's smokes in the time it took them to return. They told Mike's granddad some bullshit about Mike falling during a game of dodgeball. Although not all the spider blood had been cleared from Stan's hair (a part of you doubted it would ever come out), the old man had bought it, and Mike had been taken to the hospital. Your heart broke to watch the car carrying Mike peel down the road. You would go see him first thing tomorrow.

The other kids had already gave a cover story to their parents that morning, before venturing into the house – God, had that really been only just this morning? – they had told them that they were all having a slumber party. Except for Beverly, whose lie was a little more extravagant – she had claimed she was at a relative's.

You couldn't bear to part with them, not yet, and so they all followed you back to your house. You turned on every light in the little home, pulled out every blanket and pillow you could find, and together the seven of you curled up on the living room floor.

Then came the crying.

That lasted for a while. The kids all sobbed, all lamented on what the fuck had happened to their lives, to their carefree summer, and tried to come to terms with what they had experienced. You held back your own tears, only nodding along, allowing the venting to come to a natural end.

Then, for some time, came quiet.

Absolute stillness. No sound at all, save the *tick-tick-tick* of your kitchen clock.

And, eventually, driven by pure exhaustion, came sleep.

You were the last one awake. Bill was slumped against your right arm, Stan on your left (you had let the kids use your shower one by one, and his curly hair was finally free of spider guts). Richie was stretched out on the floor and Eddie lay across his legs. Ben was on one sofa, and Bev the one opposite to him, curled tightly like a cat.

It wasn't until 3 am that sleep found you.

Bells. Chiming bells.

You had gone *Todash*, only this time you got the feeling you weren't visiting the past, but were very much in the here-and-now. You were standing inside a sewer, murky water soaking through the soles of your sneakers, reaching all the way to your socks. *It feels so real.*

You wandered for a while. Everything was quiet, still, sleeping. The sewers twisted and turned. You recited your poem, which had become a sort of security blanket. "See the TURTLE of enormous girth..."

"Maturin," A body-less voice whispered, and immediately you knew it belonged to the John Wayne looking man. "The turtle's name is Maturin."

"Any other advice?" you asked the empty tunnel. "Something I can actually use, like oh, I don't know, tomorrow's Lotto America numbers?"

"He's going to lie to you." The voice responded. It spoke no more.

Eventually, you found an opening that led into a great, underground chasm. You knew, before setting foot inside, that it was Pennywise's den.

And if you hadn't been sure before, you were sure as fuck now. Inside was a great, leaning tower of items. Centuries worth of toys and clothes were stacked on top of each other like a dragon's hoard, stretching up and reaching for an unseen ceiling. If that wasn't unsettling enough, countless bodies – some half eaten – floated in a long slow circle around it, like flies wrapped in cobweb and saved for later.

You approached it, noticing that there was a stage built into the side. *Pennywise The Dancing Clown!* was scrawled across the headboard in large, happy red lettering. And, as advertised, curled up in the center of the stage, was Pennywise the Dancing Clown. He was watching you.

“O, hail! The mortal traveler, never hath we been so ill met. Ye’ve come to gloat, tell me?”

Your face stretched in insuppressible surprise. Pennywise was bent over himself like a sick stray cat, hands on the knees that were pulled up to his chest. His body was alive with tremors. The pike was gone from his head. His eyes were dark and unseeing, one a bloody hole, the other golden and vacant. His expression was one of indescribable hatred.

The Old English style of his words threw you for a moment, until you saw how heavy he was panting, how his tremors were not his own doing. He was injured, terribly injured, and you were very starkly reminded of his inhumanness – he was not a clown, not a ‘he’ at all, but some other unimaginable ancient being. He had not the energy nor clarity to speak in words familiar to you, and so had reverted back to what was most likely the English he had heard when he first found himself on this planet.

And yet a rusty pike, thrown by a little ol’ *New Kids on the Block* superfan Ben, had brought him to this. He was an animal after all, an animal that could be killed. The thought made you swell with courage.

“No,” you said finally. The clown sneered.

“Ye think so little of The Eater of Worlds?” He hacked, that strange, floating blood whisking up from his mouth. “Aye, you do, but this form will heal faster than ye thinkith, and then shall I have you,” as if it prove his point, the tremors began to subside. “Ye whove been promised to me. Soon shall I feast on your friends, and ye shall see. When I rest, you’ll float in my lights until I awake, and then again shall you bear witness. *Mine, mine, all mine*, and when the last beam breaks – when the Crimson King brings the Tower to ruin’ and I sleep no more, when I and all my sisters are free to roam this world and the next, then and *only then* will I rid you of your pathetic, sniveling form, I will devour your flesh with the greatest joy, and keep your soul with me always – a *souvenir*!”

This was a far cry from the Pennywise that had been head banging along to AC/DC.

The accent had begun to drop off. He was healing. It wouldn't be much longer until he was back on his feet. *The Tower*. The Tower was what the man with the cowboy hat was after – “*We all have roles to play on the path to the Tower*” he had said. It came to you suddenly, obviously, what was happening – the Tower, whatever and wherever it was, was what held all worlds together. Only now it was sick, and so creatures like Pennywise had been able to slip through the cracks and end up in places like Maine, 1989. Cowboy man was trying to find the Tower, trying to save it.

And in the wake of this cosmic calamity, this inter dimensional battle in which the fate of all living things hung in the balance, you had been chosen, by forces unknown – maybe by the Turtle or the Tower itself – to save little old dreary Derry.

*A great choice*, you thought, with an edge of frustrated anger. *Let's arm Liberal Arts girl with a gang of preteens and send 'em off to fight the shape-shifting, mind-reading, realty-altering, child-eating clown. What could go wrong? Couldn't even give me any fuckin' super powers.*

That's what you wanted to say.

“What do you mean – what do you mean I've been promised to you?” Is what you said instead.

The clown hissed. “Looking for answers, as always, I see. Of course you were promised to me. I've known you, been haunted by you, since I've come to this planet, Y/N, - you think it an accident?”

“I'm starting to think Maturin sent me,” you said. “I think Maturin sent the cowboy from the other world to save the Tower – whatever that is – and sent *me* to save Derry.”

Pennywise shrieked, shrieked like you had gutted him, and despite it being a dream and knowing he couldn't hurt you, you jumped back.

“The turtle is dead!” The clown screamed. Then he almost immediately calmed, began muttering to himself; “*The turtle is dead. The turtle is dead. The turtle is dead.*”

*All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy*, you thought. You had read

that somewhere.

“Hmm,” you said, mimicking the mocking tone of Pennywise from the night before. “Nah, I don’t think he’s dead.”

“You’re a *gift*. A gift from the Crimson King, you were made to bear witness to my power, to be – my – *play – thing!*” He snarled out the last few words. Then he smiled. “You know it, too. What would you do without me, Y/N? Go get a 9 to 5? Marry a, a *nice boy* and squeeze out some meaty babies of your own? *No*. I give your life meaning.”

Your blood ran cold. You swallowed hard. The clown made a *humming* noise that almost sounded like a purr.

“And you *like it*,” he shook his head, bells jingling. “You like *i-T!*”

“Fuck you,” you spat. The clown laughed in delight.

“I can read your mind, Y/N! I know your filthy little thoughts!” He rubbed his hands together in glee, started rocking back and forth. “Yes, yes, I know, I *see*.”

*Fucking hell*. Was he right? Did a part of you – some sick, repressed part – enjoy this whole thing? You thought back to that feeling of floating you had experienced – when Pennywise had held you so close, had pried you open and tasted you. Did you enjoy *him*?

Maybe you did.

But he had also made your kids cry.

“Hey, Pennywise, you asked me a question a while back, do you remember?”

The clown frowned. He hadn’t been expecting that. He gave an uncertain growl.

“You asked me how to get to City Hall. And I’ve got your answer – *go fuck yourself*.”

You woke up.

## 6. Chapter 6

### Summary for the Chapter:

final chapter

Burning. Something was burning; the sharp tang deep in your sinuses was the first sense that came to you. Mama bear instincts kicked in, and you leapt to your feet.

“What’s that? Fire?” you yelped, strangled by the blankets that had wound their way around you. Your question was answered by giggles.

“We made breakfast!” Eddie called.

You untangled yourself, kicked the covers for good measure, then made your way over. The gang was in your kitchen, some sitting on the marble counter, some on the floor. Everyone had a plate of watery eggs and too-thin pancakes. Eddie was bent over the stove, making more burnt food. A glance to the clock told you it was midafternoon.

“You raided my fridge?” you said, sleep-heavy eyes narrowing at the kids. Bill shook his head.

“We didn’t *raid* it, we borrowed some things,” there was a rare smile on the boy’s face. The others snickered.

“Stole it. You *stole* some things. What bills you paying to be stealing my food? And why didn’t you wake me up?”

“Figured you needed the sleep,” Richie shrugged, his thin legs daggling over from his spot up top the counter. “You had to recover from your *seven minutes in heaven* with the murder clown.”

You shot him an incredulous look, then groaned, smacking your hand dramatically to your forehead. You knew you were absolutely never, ever, *ever* going to hear the end of that - even if the bold move *had* saved their sorry skins.



“Beep beep?” Richie added helpfully.

“Beep fucking beep.” you said. That’s when you noticed Mike – sitting with the others on the floor, right arm bandaged up in a sling. Not broken, then, just fractured. He must have come over earlier, having been let inside by the kids. You gasped.

“Mike!” You scooped the kid up into a tight hug, careful not rub against the wounded arm. “You’re here! You’re okay! I-I’m so sorry, I shouldn’t have left you, Jesus, I’m so glad you’re here!”

Mike tolerated the fussing for a bit, and then gently wiggled free from your grasp. “I’m alright,” he said with a bright smile. He handed you a plate of the offending food.

The kids all seemed...okay. *Surprisingly* okay. There was something about being away from Neibolt street and the sewers that made the whole memory just a bit fuzzy – sure, you all remembered it, but it was as if it hadn’t happened to you, like you had watched the whole gruesome thing go down on a TV, safely tucked away behind a blanket and a bowl of popcorn. It was probably an ability Pennywise had over his escaped prey, helped him stay undetected. Couldn’t go hunting after a monster you couldn’t remember, right? At least the kids would save on therapy bills.

But before the memories became too smoky, you had to let them in on everything you had kept secret.

“Guys,” you sighed, sitting down next to the others on the floor, your plate on your lap. “I have to tell you something.”

The kids settled at the sound of your serious tone, leaned in with rapt attention. You felt like a camp counselor, preparing to tell a ghost story around a campfire. “I know it seems unreal, but everything that happened was *very*real, and there’s some things you need to understand.”

And so your palaver began. You told them the entire story from your perspective – moving back to Derry, the gap of memories, finding out about your ability to go *Todash*, the man with the missing fingers, the Tower, the turtle Maturin, Pennywise’s ominous threat. Time groaned

nearly to a halt while you spoke, and though you talked for what felt like hours, the *tick tick tick* of the clock told you that almost no time had passed at all. Your food had gone cold.

When you were finally done, everyone remained quiet for some time, deep in thought.

“This is some cosmic bullshit.” Eddie said finally.

“So we have to go back,” Bill said. “We h-have to get to him before he fully heals. Kill him once and for all.” You noticed that this was the first time Bill had referred to Pennywise as ‘him’. It unsettled you.

Slowly you nodded. “Yeah, I think so.”

“No.” Stan said. Everyone turned to him.

“What do you mean, no?” Bill asked.

“I mean no, I’m not going. We nearly died the last time and I – I don’t wanna die, okay?” He looked out from furrowed brows, was met with several shocked expressions. “Look, Bill, I’m sorry about your brother. I am. But if Ben’s right, and this only happens every 27 years, then he should be going to sleep soon, and we’ll all be old and far away before he wakes up again!”

“Stan, *common!*” Beverly yelled. Not for the first time, you realized you really liked Bev. She had a firecracker heart.

“Is that so crazy? That I wanna live?” Stan snapped back defensively.

“No, guys, Stan’s right,” you said. Beverly shot you a betrayed, troubled look. “I can’t bring you guys back there. I can’t make that choice for you, not after what you’ve all been through. You don’t have to come – just know that *I’m* going back.”

“I’m in.” Bill said immediately. You met his glance briefly, giving him a silent, grateful nod. He nodded back.

“Me too.” Beverly said.

“I need revenge for my arm,” Mike said.

Ben, Stan, Eddie and Richie had yet to speak. They looked around, sheepishly.

“I’ll go,” Ben said. Your nerves lifted. Stan continued to shake his head. Eddie and Richie looked to each other.

“I think I’ll pass,” Richie said darkly, a rare occurrence for the kid. Taking the cue, Eddie also shook his head in a silent ‘no’.

You felt bitter disappointment bubble in your chest. You understood, understood completely, and for the most part you were glad to know that at least three of your kids would live out the remainder of their lives unharmed by the demon. But a smaller, more persistent part wanted everyone together. *Needed* everyone together. You were stronger that way.

“Okay,” you said.

Soon after that buzz-kill of a conversation, the kids left your place. They all returned to their individual homes, their individual hum-drum lives. And for almost three weeks, you heard nothing from either your ka-tet or your murder clown. A cool fog had curled over Derry, rubbed its muzzle against every window-pane, a small warning that summer would soon pass. You still hadn’t found a job. Everything was quiet.

Until one night, when upon falling asleep on the couch (as you had made a habit of doing, finding yourself unable to sleep in your bed) bells chimed in your head.

You found you were sitting on something wooden. Surrounding you were masses of people, packed tightly against rows and rows of pew-like benches. They would have looked like any other assortment of people; the kind of random selection you only find at movie theatres and public parks – yet every single one of them was missing a face. There was nothing but dark, shadowy skin where their features should have been. You were underneath a giant, red and white circus tent, facing a tiny stage.

Carnival music was blaring in the distance. The smell of popcorn, spilt beer and burnt food was thick in the air. You almost gagged.

One of the face-less humans turned to you, held a finger up to where its mouth should be, signaling you to be quiet.

“Fuck you, creepy dream man!” you hissed. You were getting sick of going *Todash*, and knowing that you couldn’t get hurt in this state made you bold. *This isn’t a normal Todash, though*, you thought. *This is different*.

The blood red curtain on stage was pulled back. The shadow people began a thunderous applause.

Standing on the stage, of course, was Pennywise.

He looked exactly as deeply unsettling as he always did; only tonight his right eye was a deep, angry red. You smirked at the sight. Served him right.

He took a few exaggerated bows, bending half his long body down to the floor, waving to the crowd, who continued to cheer like they were front row to a *Queen* concert. Eventually, he held up a gloved hand, and the crowd was silenced.

From behind his back he pulled out a marionette doll, held up by long strings connected to two wooden sticks he held in either hand.

The doll was a perfect replica of Stan.

“I don’t wanna fight the scary clown!” Pennywise squeaked, imitating Stan’s voice purposefully poorly. He twitched his hands, causing the doll to slap a hand to its wooden head. The doll’s features very suddenly switched to that of Bill.

“We *gotta* fight the scary clown!” Pennywise grunted, taking on an oddly old sounding voice for Bill. “He ate my tasty, tasty brother!”

“This isn’t even *good*!” you called from your spot in the audience, both hands cupped around your mouth. The shadow people – despite not having mouths – gasped. Pennywise glanced up into the crowd at you, dark eyes narrowing.

“Common, you’re better than this! You could at least make it *funny*!” you tore a bag of peanuts from the shadow person next to you and

began pelting them at the stage. “*Boo!*”

Pennywise growled, signature drool dripping from his mouth, and then the doll’s features changed again – becoming a perfect replica of *you*. This should be good.

“I’m just a dumb little girl that can’t find a job!” Pennywise mocked, pulling on the strings, making the doll swirl in circles. “I’ve got a big fat head full of bad ideas! I’m too brave for my own good! I can’t accept the fact that I was made to be with Pennywise *forever!*”

“Still not funny! Common, guy, I’ve *seen* you do better!”

Pennywise growled again, stomped one boot against the stage like a toddler throwing a tantrum, then hurled the doll to the ground. With lightning speed, he rolled back onto his haunches and sprung into the audience towards you.

You half laughed, half screeched, quickly scrambling out of the pews, smacking away at shadow people, and tore your way out of the tent.

You were in the middle of a circus. Carnival music blasted, face-less vendors shouted to passing, face-less visitors – *Step right up little lady! Try the cotton candy! It’s to die for!* - brightly colored rides swirled and twisted. Someone was juggling; someone was twirling swords that glinted under the moonlight.

You ran into the crowd, hoping to lose the clown. You jumped up on a carousel – the first thing you came to – and began attempting an impossible run to the other side. You risked a glance over your shoulder and were met with the horrifying sight of Pennywise, on all fours, scaling over the ceramic horses and elephants with impossible speed. He was gaining on you, dark lips pulled back in a snarl.

You may be dreaming, but you still didn’t want him anywhere near you.

You tripped, smacking against the floor, and a giant gloved hand wrapped around your ankle, squeezing hard. You yelped. You could *feel* the pain. This wasn’t *Todash*. This was something else. *Oh, fuck.*

Pennywise dragged you roughly across the spinning floor, the opposing forces making you dizzy. He flipped you over onto your back, held your wrists down over your head in either hand, and sat on top of your waist – straddling you.

“Tsk tsk tsk,” he said, a pleased smile on his painted face. The pressure from his weight made you gasp. “Where’s that smart mouth now, *hmm?*”

You struggled in his grasp, but it was useless.

He moved so his right hand was holding both your wrists in place. He used his left to gently stroke the side of your face.

“I forgive you,” he whispered. “I know you can’t help being a stupid, little human.”

You were at a loss for words. The two of you were still spinning on the carousel, and from behind his head you could see the stars twirling in circles along with you. *Wake up, wake up, wake up!*

A deep purring noise came from the back of his throat, caused his whole body to vibrate. He rolled his hips against yours. Familiar heat flushed through you.

“Would it be so bad, Y/N? To give in? To *release* yourself to me? You’d be free, you’d be *floating*.” He snickered, delighted with himself. His dark eyes swayed like loose dice. His hips rolled again, pressing down into you. You bit back a moan. “Tell me, how – *oh ho ho ho!* - how else do you think this could *possibly end?*”

Before you could answer, the entire scene flickered out of existence.

You gasped from the sudden lack of pressure, jumped to shaking feet, the immediately crashed back down. Your head was still spinning.

After a bit, you stood on weak legs. A cool breeze brushed against your sweaty skin, worked through your hair and was pulled in by your lungs. You were in a field, with nothing but red, rolling hills for miles around. *Roses*, you realized. *Everything’s covered in roses*. Stars burned, and a moon – too bright and big to be of Earth – hung over the sky, bathing the strange land in a soft white glow.

“H-hello?” you called into the night.

“Y/N,” a voice behind you said. You knew who it was before even turning.

The lanky cowboy stood, his right hand with the missing fingers resting on his hip – you could see a holster strapped there, the butt of an ancient looking revolver poking out from its sheath, shimmering in the moonlight.

“Oh h-hey, it’s Mr. Helpful!” you said, still shaking off the panic Pennywise had infected you with. The man’s lined face didn’t so much as twitch.

“He’s healing fast, Y/N. You need to act soon.”

You wanted to scream with frustration. This man – who had yet to tell you his name – clearly knew more than you did. Clearly had a better grasp on this whole ‘cosmic bullshit’ then you did – and yet he was exceedingly, unbearably unhelpful.

“No shit he’s healing fast! I caught his puppeteer act just now! What do you want me to do about it?” you snapped. “Why – why is this my problem at all? Why does it matter? If everything’s true – if there are different worlds and different times and there’s some ultimate evil battle raging on, what does it matter if a clown eats a few people occasionally in fuckin’ *Derry*? Why should I risk my life and the lives of my kids for that?”

The man’s burning blue gaze never faltered. It made you feel like a child. A stupid, ignorant child. “We all have roles to play on the path to the Tower.”

“That’s so *fucking vague*!”

The man said nothing. Eventually, unwillingly, you relented.

“How? Help me. How - how do I kill him?”

The man shrugged. Tapped a finger against the pistol on his narrow hip.

“You’ve got guns in your world?”

“Yeah?”

“Get a gun.”

And when you woke up, that’s exactly what you did.

You knocked once, hard, on Bill’s front door. His parents weren’t there, you knew, somehow. He opened it, eyes going wide at the sight of you, a determined look on your face and an AR – 15 strapped to your back.

“You ready?”

He swallowed. Then he nodded.

Beverly, Bill, Mike, Ben and yourself met back up at the Neibolt house. Mike had got a bolt shooter for everyone other than you. You were packing lead. *Like a gunslinger*, you thought.

After a few empty words of encouragement, your rag-tag group made its way through the house. The so called crack-den was empty, and thankfully, unchanged. No more smoke and mirrors. You made your way down the dirty stairs and approached the well, where Pennywise lived. You could feel him down there, healing.

“Alright guys,” you said. “We can’t hesitate, not even a bit. If he had wanted us dead last time, we’d be six feet under right now. He wanted to toy with us, and he won’t do that this time.”

“We see him, we shoot.” Bill said. You met his blue eyes, saw how heavy and determined they were, and not for the first time you wished this had never happened. You’d do anything to have them back home, safe, enjoying their summer. Anything.

Wouldn’t you?

Using a rope Mike had brought, you all climbed down.

You were the last to hit the ground, palms stinging from the climb down. The murky water of the sewer seeped through your sneakers,



reaching all the way to your socks. *Familiar.*

“You know where he is?” Beverly asked you.

“If it’s the same as the dream then...yeah. I think I can find it. This way.”

The group wandered for some time, tense, shoes splashing through the ‘gray water’, as Eddie called it. Eventually, you found the hole that led to the underground chasm - exactly like in your dream.

“In there?” Mike asked with a nod. You unhooked the weapon from your back, adjusted the sight, clicked off the safety. You had shot a gun before, but you were far from experienced. Despite that, you felt calm – somehow, you were convinced that the cowboy man would help, would guide your hand when the time came. *I do not shoot with my hand*, you thought. *I shoot with my mind.*

You nodded back to Mike.

Beverly took a deep breath. Ben and Bill were silent.

You all stepped through.

“Holy shit,” Ben whispered.

It was even more terrible to see the tower in person. The bodies in the air spun in their slow, eternal dance. You scanned them quickly, hoping to God Georgie wasn’t up there – you noticed Bill doing the same.

He wasn’t.

“He’s not there.” Beverly said.

At first you thought she also was looking for Georgie – but the girl was pointing towards the stage. *Pennywise the Dancing Clown!*

It was empty.

With the slow steps of a thief in the night, you all approached the stage. It wasn’t empty – not completely.

Standing in the middle, so small you could barley see it, was a tiny soaked Chihuahua.

You all looked to each other. A trick? Or just a lost dog?

The dog noticed you and yapped loudly.

“N-no one’s afraid of dogs, right?” Bill half-joked, nervously. For a beat, no one said a word.

“I am.” Ben said quietly.

The dogs little body began to tremble. It snarled, bubbly foam dripping from its jaws. It yipped once, a piercing sound.

With a loud *grrrrrrrip*, the Chihuahua’s head split clean open.

The group gasped.

The tear went straight down the middle of its face. Flaps of skin drifted from either side, covering its big bug eyes. Its bloody skull shone bright white in the dark. From behind the skull, something was moving.

With no warning, a huge, shaggy black paw reached out from the wound into the air, then hit the ground with a *thunk*. Out came another. The little dog was nothing more than a wet, folded pile of skin, and out from it was emerging a hell hound of impossible proportions.

*Of course.*

“Kill it!” Mike shouted. With surprisingly steady hands, you brought your gun up, balancing the butt of the weapon against the crook of your shoulder. Aim, breathe, fire.

**BOOM!**

Your ears immediately popped, the bang of the gun reverberating in the sewers. The recoil was harsh against your shoulder, but nothing you couldn’t handle.

The bullet flew true, zipping straight into the bubbling mass of fur, burying into it, but the creature was too massive to be bothered.

The thing was mostly free now, its entire body out, a giant tail swishing against the floor. Only its head was still being pulled from the body of the Chihuahua, emerging from nothing like it was coming out from Mary Poppins magic bag.

*Aim, breathe, fire. Aim, breathe, fire.* Several more bullets popped into its back, leaving angry red dots. Nothing more than an annoyance.

*A pike brings him down for weeks, but bullets only annoy him!? You thought in a panic. Can I please see the instruction manual? How the fuck does this thing work!?*

Finally, with a sickening squelching sound, out popped the head – the wolf had two stripes of dark red fur that started from the corners of its mouth and led up over its golden, bulging, blood shot eyes.

Pennywise.

“Run!” You screamed. And you ran.

The wolf pounced, covering the total distance in one go. With the kids leading the way, and you still firing wildly, you slipped backwards through the hole and into the sewer. Pennywise was hot on your trail. The second you slipped through, Pennywise was there, but the wolf form was too big – his head smashed hard against the wall, causing the entire sewer to shake. Only his snout fit through; yellow, crooked fangs snapping fiercely, drool thick as your arm dripped from its jaws.

“*Little pigs, little pigs!*” The clown-wolf howled; his voice impossibly deep. “*Let me come in!*”

“What the fuck is that!?” Someone screamed. “Who pissed off Clifford!?”

The unmistakable voice of Richie.

You threw a glance over your shoulder. Stan, Eddie, and Richie had come, standing behind you, eyes wide, rusty pikes in their hands. You

took one absurd, wild moment to scream in joy, which probably scared the newly arrived kids even more. *Now we can all die together! Woo-hoo!*

*“Then I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll rip you limb from limb!”*

“Why don’t the bullets work?” Bill yelled over the noise.

The snout had begun to shrink, getting increasingly smaller and smaller. He was trying to squeeze through.

“Everyone get behind me!” you screamed. You had an idea.

The slightly smaller head began to push through, ragged chunks of fur being ripped out and sticking to the edges of the overhang. You held up your gun. Waited.

*Not yet, not yet, not yet.*

One giant, blood red eye came into view. It was too big for its head, too watery, bulging outwards in a threat to pop out completely. The injured eye from Ben’s pike. Still healing.

A weak spot.

*I do not kill with my gun, I kill with my heart.*

Aim, breathe, fire.

**BOOM!**

The wolf screamed in pain – not in the demonic voice of an animal, but the high-pitched, sing-song voice of Pennywise. Its jaws snapped at nothing, its head swung so rapidly it looked like a video that had been sped-up, smacking hard against the edges of the opening. Its eye had quite literally burst – rivers of swirling, bubbling, thick retina splattered to the ground like egg-yolk. You thought of the breakfast Eddie had made at your house. You nearly threw up.

“Holy *fuck!*” one of the kids screamed behind you.

“Y/N!” Bill shouted. “Don’t stop!”

You brought your weapon back up, pulled the trigger, and –

Click. Click. Click.

Nothing.

Suddenly, a small red flag popped from the barrel of your rifle. “BANG!” was written in bright yellow letters.

You screamed in frustration, threw your useless weapon to the ground. You had spent two grand on the fucking thing. Worse yet, the little trick meant Pennywise wasn’t as injured as he seemed.

Pennywise the One-Eyed Dog pulled his still-shrinking head back into the chasm, backing away, trying to regroup.

“Let’s get him!” Eddie screamed.

You were so goddamn proud of that kid.

You all crawled in. Pennywise had backed up onto his stage, not a wolf but again a clown, one gloved hand clasped tight over his missing eye.

“Stop this!” he yelled, and for a moment you all froze in place. He sounded...soft. Upset, like you had hurt his feelings. His remaining blue eye drifted lazily in his socket, watering with fat tears. His red lips were pulled up in a pout. “Why are you making this so difficult, Y/N? Don’t you want to be with me?”

It was unexplainable. Unreasonable. And yet the prickling needles pushing their way into your heart told you that yes, you felt for him. Yes, you wanted to go with him.

But not as much as you wanted to bash his fucking skull in.

Sensing the change in you, his blue eye flashed golden, he shrieked, and leapt towards the group with the grace of a cat, limbs outstretched.

Before anyone could react, he had grabbed you by the neck and pushed you behind him, where you fell to the ground.

*Huh?*

You turned back, just in time to see your lifeless body hit the floor. Pennywise had snapped your neck.

*What? What the fuck?*

You tried to scream, tried to move, but you were stuck to the ground. The kids couldn't see you.

Blood rocketed from every hole in your face. The group screamed. Pennywise screamed himself, mocking the kids, throwing his hands to his face in an “*Oh, shit, did I do that?*” expression.

He had, somehow, made you invisible – had you chained by unseen shackles to the floor – and had created a projection of you. A projection that was bleeding out against the sewer floor, dark blood swirling in the thin layer of murky water, head bent almost all the way backwards, eyes vacant and rolled back. He wanted to make the kids think you were dead, wanted them to have no hope of you having survived.

Because if even for a second they thought you were still alive, they'd come back for you. Pennywise knew that.

It was a terrible, mean trick. *And it's probably gonna work*, you thought. It must have taken all of the clown's remaining energy, because he was staggering on his feet, getting slow, desperate, sloppy. He skidded in front of the group, giving Stan just enough time to swing his pike, catching him over the head. Pennywise yelped, rounded on him, and quickly said head morphed into a twisted vision of a woman with long black hair, pupil-less eyes and a twisted face.

“Fuck you!” Mike said, and shot a bolt towards the clown. Again, the clown screamed, shook his head like a dog, and opened his mouth – dozens of charred, dark hands came reaching out, grabbing for Mike.

This went on for a while, with you watching in mute horror and suspense. But your kids were winning. Pennywise was flashing wildly between his different forms – you noticed with a deep sense of shame that for a moment he took the form of Beverly's father. *So that's who*

*the voice had been.* You hadn't been able to protect her from all her demons, it seems.

But your kids – your ka-tet – had *won*.

Pennywise was thrown down on his back, scrambling backwards away from your group. His entire body was shaking, his head bobbing up and down on his neck, face pulled back in both pain and fear, tears rolling down his painted cheeks. It was a surreal, unbelievably satisfying sight.

"We're not afraid of you," you heard Bill say.

*Hell yeah! That's my fucking boy!* you cheered, your heart pounding.

And – presumably dying - Pennywise toppled backwards, into the depths of the other half of the well.

The kids were triumphant. They hollered. They whooped and hi-fived.

And then they cried. They held each other, shaking. They came back towards you, and held your body – which apparently was real enough to be held – and one by one, wiping their eyes with quivering hands, they *thanked* you.

*I'm right here!* you screamed. But you were still invisible, immobile. They couldn't hear you. *God dammit, kids, please, – I'm right here! Don't leave me like this!*

But after a while, holding each other tight, muttering empty comforts to one another, they left.

Your fake body, bloody and crooked, winked out of existence.

~

You stayed like that, stuck to the floor, for an unknowable span of time. You drifted in and out of consciousness. How long had it been? Hours? Days? You couldn't say. There was nothing but the occasional skittering rat, the *drip drip drip* of water from somewhere far off to interrupt the nothingness.

In the bouts of unconsciousness you went *Todash*. You could see your kids, standing in a circle, holding hands. It was sunny outside. You could almost feel the breeze, so different from your damp, sewer tomb. They were speaking to each other, but you couldn't make out the words. Your heart swelled with pure, unadulterated love. They were safe. They had each other. They would go on to lead happy, happy lives – and you knew, not too long from now, they would forget the horror they had seen. It would be nothing but a fuzzy memory, the haze of a fever dream that lifts more and more as the light of day stretches on.

Eventually, Pennywise emerged from his hole. He looked truly terrible – not in a scary way, but in a sick way. *He's starving*, you realized. *We've kept him so busy, he hasn't been able to feed.* On four trembling limbs, he crawled towards you.

“My gift,” he sung, softly, and gently he pulled you snug to his chest. “My pretty, pretty gift.”

*The kids are safe*, you thought with relief. *The kids will be safe.*

And then immediately the thought was replaced with bubbling panic. There was no escaping this time, you knew, and you felt what it must feel to drown, thrashing against your own mind like an exhausted swimmer too far from shore.

*God damn you John Wayne! God damn your turtle and your fucking Tower!*

Pennywise leaned down, and his thick, burning tongue licked the tears from your face. You hadn't realized you'd been crying. The clown was muttering under his breath, taking no notice of your plight. “Sleep, now. Now I must sleep,” the long arms wrapped around your waist hoisted you up so you were looking down onto him. “And if I sleep, you sleep, too.”

His face pulled back. His mouth opened and his gums protruded out from his jaw. His eyes rolled back and then became nothing more than tight slits, making room for his ever expanding mouth. For a moment, he looked like a yawning cat – and then the mouth continued to grow, pushed back until his head was nothing but a



giant hole, rippling with deep folds of tiny, dagger teeth. From that hole came dancing, bright golden lights. Golden like his eyes.

You couldn't look away. Your drowning mind began to calm – but not the calm of a survivor, it was the calm that comes just before the struggling swimmer passes out and is dragged into the ocean's depths. The lights burned, and your mind slipped away.

Was this it, then? Forced to live out eternity with Pennywise? Forever his toy, forever trying to distract him from his own blood lust? Would that save lives? Could the Losers save you still – 27 years from now, when the clown woke? Would they even remember you?

*Here lies Y/N; daughter, friend, pet to Pennywise the Dancing Clown. She never did get a real job.*

"Did you know?" you screamed inside your mind, clawing to the last scrap of consciousness you had left. You knew the man could hear you, somehow. Knew he was watching. "Is this what you meant when you said I had a *role* to play? *Did you know?*"

*See the clown, marvel at his power, all things serve the fuckin' Tower.*

A quick vision flickered in your mind, and you saw him, Mr. John Wayne himself. The man said nothing. His blue eyes were glazed with pain.

You relented, slowly, with the learned helplessness of the mouse experimented on in a lab. Hopeless. You realized, of course, that you had never been sent to kill Pennywise – you had been sent to save the Losers Club. *They* were the heroes of this story. You were a footnote.

"Will it make a difference?" you whispered.

"Yes," the man said. "It will make a universe of difference."

That's something. Anything. "Sing my name," you said. "Once you reach your Tower, once you get to that room at the top and save us all – sing my name for me."

The man's hard mouth twitched slightly. "Of course."

You and your ka-tet of Losers had, for now, saved Derry from Pennywise. Because of you, the kids would live, and maybe they'd come back one day to finish Pennywise off once and for all. But this man – who's name you never learned - he was gonna save the *universe*.

You could feel Pennywise – no longer a clown, but a pure being of energy - wrap himself around you, protectively, preparing for his long rest. Your mind started shutting down, ready to idle for twenty seven years. Would you still be the same age when you woke, or would you be older? Would your kids recognize you?

The vision of the Losers came back, blurred. They were still holding hands outside. You could smell the grass, hear the birds, feel the sun's warmth. You resisted the urge to cling to the image. You took a breath, let go. You waved goodbye to the group, knowing that they couldn't see you.

But they were there. *Safe*.

All senses were gone, now. You were floating.

Maybe you'd see them again. In a different time, a different place.

After all, there were other worlds then these.

~

*Missing: F/N L/N. If you have any information, please contact the Derry Police Department at (913) – 535 – 6280.*

**Works inspired by this one:**

- [Clowning Around](#) by [theonetheonlyalexthemonarch](#)